

What is Claimed:

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1. A method for communicating an audio message between a calling telephone apparatus and a called telephone apparatus while the called telephone apparatus remains in an on-hook state, each telephone apparatus being connected to a telephone system, said method comprising the step of introducing a digitized version of the audio message during a silent interval following the second ringing signal provided to the called telephone apparatus.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of introducing a signal identifying the calling party during the silent interval following the first ringing signal provided to the called telephone apparatus, whereby the called telephone apparatus is provided conventional Caller ID service, in addition to the audio message.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the digitized version of the audio message is of sufficient duration to extend beyond the silent interval in which it begins.

4. A method for communicating an audio message from a calling telephone apparatus to a called telephone apparatus while the called telephone apparatus remains in an on-hook state, each telephone apparatus being connected to a telephone system, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a digitized version of the audio message during a silent interval following the second ringing signal appearing at the called telephone apparatus;

converting the digitized version of the audio message to an audio version thereof;

and

introducing the audio version to a transducer to produce an audible version of the audio message.

1 5. The method of claim 4 further comprising the step of receiving a signal
2 identifying the calling party during the silent interval following the first ringing
3 signal appearing at the called telephone apparatus, whereby the called telephone
4 apparatus is provided conventional Caller ID service, in addition to the audio
5 message.

1 6. The method of claim 3 wherein the digitized version of the audio message is of
2 sufficient duration to extend beyond the silent interval in which it begins.

1 ~~7.~~ Apparatus for communicating an audio message between a calling telephone
2 apparatus and a called telephone apparatus while the called telephone apparatus
3 remains in an on-hook state, each telephone apparatus being connected to a
4 telephone system, comprising:
5 a silence detector detecting a silent interval following the second ringing signal
6 provided to the called telephone apparatus; and
7 a signal injector, responsive to the silence detector, introducing a digitized version
8 of the audio message to the called telephone apparatus during the detected silent
9 interval.

1 8. The apparatus of claim 7 further comprising a further signal injector introducing
2 a signal identifying the calling party during the silent interval following the first
3 ringing signal provided to the called telephone apparatus, whereby the called
4 telephone apparatus is provided conventional Caller ID service, in addition to the
5 audio message.

1 9. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the signal injector introduces the digitized
2 version of the audio signal during an interval which begins during the silent interval
3 and extends beyond it.

1 10. Apparatus for communicating an audio message from a calling telephone
2 apparatus to a called telephone apparatus while the called telephone apparatus
3 remains in an on-hook state, each telephone apparatus being connected to a
4 telephone system, comprising:
5 a silence detector detecting a silent interval following the second ringing signal
6 provided to the called telephone apparatus;
7 a receiver, responsive to the silence detector, receiving a digitized version of the
8 audio message at the called telephone apparatus during the detected silent interval;
9 and.
10 a digital-to-analog converter converting the digitized version of the audio message
11 to an audio version thereof; and
12 a transducer responsive to the audio version to produce an audible version of the
13 audio message.

1 11. The apparatus of claim 10 further comprising:
2 said silence detector being constructed to also detect a silent interval following the
3 first ringing signal provided to the called telephone apparatus; and
4 a further receiver responsive to the detection by said silence detector of the silent
5 interval following the first ringing signal and, during that silent interval, receiving
6 a signal identifying the calling party, whereby the called telephone apparatus is
7 provided conventional Caller ID service, in addition to the audio message.

1 12. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the receiver receives the digitized version
2 of the audio signal during an interval which begins during the silent interval and
3 extends beyond it.